

1. INTRODUCTION

Candlebark Farm is committed to ensuring that children and young people participating in its activities have a safe and happy experience. Candlebark Farm supports and respects children, young people, staff, volunteers and participants.

The aim of Candlebark Farm's Child Safe Policy (the Policy) is to protect the safety of children in our care and prevent abuse from occurring, and in the event that allegations are raised in relation to child abuse, to ensure that the allegations are properly addressed. All complaints will be treated seriously and fully investigated and handled with maximum confidentiality and discretion.

Candlebark Farm provides no means of online access for children and this protects them from any possible online abuse while present at Candlebark Farm.

Should a person wish to make any enquiries in relation to this Policy, please contact the manager of Candlebark Farm, Mike Hill at mike.hill@candlebarkfarm.com.au

Reporting Child Abuse

Candlebark Farm is committed to reporting any evidence or disclosure of child abuse to the phone number found at <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/child-protection-contacts>

The after hours Child Protection Emergency Service is- **13 1278**

2. POLICY STATEMENT

- Candlebark Farm is committed to providing the highest level of safety for all involved while staying at Candlebark Farm. This includes protecting members' privacy, promoting positive behaviours and attitudes, protecting the health safety and wellbeing of members, particularly children and delivering

Candlebark Farm's activities while acting in the best interests of children.

- Specifically, Candlebark Farm considers that the health, safety and well-being of children take priority over all other competing considerations. Candlebark Farm considers that this is necessary to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all members and protect the image and reputation of camping, Candlebark Farm and its members.
- Candlebark Farm has a zero tolerance approach to child abuse and is committed to promoting and protecting children from abuse and neglect to the greatest extent possible. All children have equal rights to protection from child abuse, regardless of their sex, religion, disability or sexual orientation etc.
- Child protection is a shared responsibility between Candlebark Farm, its employees, contractors, volunteers and members of the Candlebark Farm community. Everyone that participates in Candlebark Farm's activities is responsible for the care and protection of children, and reporting information about child abuse.
- Candlebark Farm supports the active participation of all children. It listens to their views, respects their views and involves them when making decisions, where appropriate, especially about matters that will directly affect them (including their safety). Some of the ways in which Candlebark Farm empowers children are:
 - Encouraging respectful relationships between children
 - Encourage strong friendships and peer support at the camp to ensure a sense of belonging.

- Candlebark Farm is also committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children living with a disability.
- If any person believes a child is in immediate risk of abuse, telephone 000.

3. SCOPE

This Policy applies to everyone involved in or connected to Candlebark Farm, including (but not limited to) participants, parents and staff.

4. RELATED DOCUMENTS & LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

This Policy must be read in conjunction with:

- the laws of the Commonwealth and Victoria (as amended from time to time) including but not limited to:
 - Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
 - Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015 (Vic)
 - Crimes Act 1958 (Vic); and
 - Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic)

5. DEFINITIONS

Child means a person under the age of 18 years unless otherwise stated under the law applicable to the child (eg, for the purposes of child sexual offences in Victoria, a “child” refers to a person under the age of 16 years).

Child abuse means all forms of physical abuse, emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse and exploitation, neglect or negligent treatment, commercial (e.g. for financial gain) or other exploitation of a child and includes any actions that results in actual or potential harm to a child.

Child protection means any responsibility, measure or activity undertaken to safeguard children from Harm.

Grooming refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child under the age of 16 years to lower their inhibitions and prepare them for engagement in a sexual offence. It can also refer to the act of befriending the child's carer, family or supervisor with the view of gaining access to a child. Grooming can take place in any setting where a relationship is formed, such as leisure, music, sports and religious activities, or in internet chatrooms, in social media or by other technological channels.

Harm is any detrimental effect of a significant nature to the Child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing.

Sexual offence (in Victoria) means a criminal offence involving or exposing a child under the age of 16 years to sexual activity or actions of indecency beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexually offence behaviours can include sexual touching, voyeurism, exhibitionism, Grooming and exposing the child to or involving the child in pornography.

Mandatory reporter means a person who is legally required to make a report to the Department of Health and Human Services or the Police if they form a belief

on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection. It includes (but is not limited to) teachers, principals, registered psychologists, nurses, doctors and midwives.

6. RECOGNISING AND REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

A person may, in the course of participating in the activities of Candlebark Farm or carrying out their work, form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from child abuse.

If a person is concerned about an immediate risk to a child's safety, the person must phone Victoria Police on "000" as soon as practicable.

Specific types of **Child abuse** include:

- **Physical abuse:** occurs when a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant Harm as a result of a physical injury, such as a non-accidental physical injury.
- **Sexual abuse:** occurs when a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant Harm as a result of sexual abuse, such as when a child is exploited, or used by another for his or her sexual gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others.
- **Emotional and psychological abuse:** occurs when a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, emotional or psychological Harm of such a kind that the child's emotional or intellectual development is or is likely to be significantly damaged; and
- **Neglect:** occurs when a child's physical development or health has been, or is likely to be significantly damaged. It refers to an omission, such as depriving a child of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to

and affection from adults, or medical care.

Mandatory Reporting

Select classes of people in the community (including teachers, nurses and doctors – amongst others) are required by law to report to the Child Protection Unit of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) where they have formed a belief, on reasonable grounds, that a child is in need of protection because they have suffered (or are likely to suffer) significant harm due to physical or sexual abuse.

This report must be made as soon as practicable, and after each occasion where he or she becomes aware of a further reasonable grounds for the belief.

Reasonable grounds for belief

A reasonable belief is formed if a reasonable person believes that:

- the child is in need of protection;
- the child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm as a result of physical or sexual injury; and
- the child's parents are unable or unwilling to protect the child.

To form a reasonable belief, you should consider and objectively assess all the relevant facts, such as the source of the allegation and how it was communicated, the nature of and details of the allegation, and whether there is any other related matters known regarding the alleged perpetrator.

A 'reasonable belief' or a 'belief on reasonable grounds' is not the same as having proof, but is more than mere rumour or speculation.

You will have reasonable grounds to notify if:

- a child states that they have been physically or sexually abused;
- a child states that they know someone who has been physically or sexually abused (sometimes the child may be talking about themselves);
- someone who knows a child states that the child has been physically or sexually abused;
- professional observations of the child's behaviour or development leads a professional to form a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused or is likely to be abused; or
- signs of abuse lead to a belief that the child has been physically or sexually abused.

Voluntary Reporters

In addition to the mandatory reporting obligations above, any person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection from any form of child abuse, *may* disclose that information to the Police, DHHS or the Commissioner for Children & Young People (**CCYP**).

Reporting Child Sexual Abuse

If a person receives information that leads them to form a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed in Victoria against a child (under the age of 16 years) by another person (of or over the age of 18 years), the person has a legal obligation to disclose that information to the

Police as soon as it is practicable. Individuals who fail to comply with this obligation under the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) may be subject to a penalty of imprisonment.

Candlebark Farm Approach to Reports of Abuse

Candlebark Farm supports and encourages a person to make a report to the Police, CCYP or DHHS if they form a belief on reasonable grounds that a child is in need of protection, or they are concerned about the safety, health or wellbeing of a child.

Any person that makes a report in good faith in accordance with their reporting obligations (whether mandatory or voluntary) will be supported by Candlebark Farm, and will not be penalised by Candlebark Farm for making the report.

If a person is uncertain as to whether they should make a report to an external authority in relation to the safety of a child, they may speak to the Candlebark Farm manager for guidance and information. If in doubt, ask for assistance.

If an allegation is made against a member of staff or volunteer, Candlebark Farm will follow the reporting obligations and take all steps to ensure that the safety of the child and other children is paramount.

Candlebark Farm will investigate allegations of inappropriate conduct against a child in accordance with procedural fairness and will handle the allegations in a confidential and sensitive manner to the greatest extent possible.

Candlebark Farm will cooperate with the directions of the Police, CCYP and/or DHHS in relation to any investigation conducted by these authorities.

Candlebark Farm will keep a register of any allegations regarding inappropriate conduct.

undertaking their child protection responsibilities.

- Facilitating the reporting of any inappropriate behaviour or suspected abusive activities.

7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PERSONNEL PROTECTING CHILDREN

The Board of Candlebark Farm has ultimate responsibility for the detection and prevention of child abuse and is responsible for ensuring that appropriate policies and procedures and a Child Protection Policy is in place.

The Manager of Candlebark Farm will act as its Child Safety Officer who will be the primary point of contact for all concerns related to child safety and is responsible for:

- Dealing with and investigating reports of child abuse;
- Ensuring that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are aware of relevant laws, organisational policies and procedures, and the organisation's Code of Conduct;
- Ensuring that all adults within the Candlebark Farm community are aware of their obligation to report suspected sexual abuse of a child in accordance with these policies and procedures;
- Ensuring that all staff, contractors and volunteers are aware of their obligation to observe the Code of Conduct (particularly as it relates to child safety);
- Providing supervision/support for staff, contractors and volunteers in

All **staff/volunteers/contractors** share in the responsibility for the prevention and detection of child abuse, and must:

- Familiarise themselves with the relevant laws, the Code of Conduct, and Candlebark Farm's policy and procedures in relation to child protection, and comply with all requirements;
 - understand the rights of children;
 - respect the cultural and religious practices of families who access Candlebark Farm's services;
 - understand and appropriately respond to the needs of children with developmental delays or disabilities;
 - appropriately act on any concerns raised by children;
 - understand the definitions, indicators and impact of child abuse;
 - at all times, know and follow regulations in relation to the care of children and follow the Candlebark Farm Code of Conduct for dealing with;
 - co-operate with police and/or other formal investigations to the best of their ability; and
 - not harm or exploit children who access Candlebark Farm's services.

8. RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING

The minimum standard for background checks of employees, contractors and volunteers of Candlebark Farm and its members is the law as it applies in Victoria.

Candlebark Farm undertakes a comprehensive recruitment and screening process for all staff, contractors and volunteers which aims to:

- promote and protect the safety of all children who participate in the activities of Candlebark Farm;
- identify and recruit the safest and most suitable candidates who share Candlebark Farm's values and commitment to protect children; and
- prevent a person from working at Candlebark Farm if they pose an unacceptable risk to children.

Candlebark Farm requires staff, contractors and volunteers to pass the recruitment and screening process prior to commencing their engagement with Candlebark Farm.

As part of the screening and recruitment process, an applicant must provide appropriate evidence (e.g. WWCC or other state equivalent and/or Police check) to show that they are suitable to work with children and young people in a recreational setting. Candlebark Farm requires that:

all Candlebark Farm staff members require a WWCC; and

the following key event personnel must have a valid WWCC:

- those paid by Candlebark Farm for their services;
- volunteers with regular roles in Candlebark Farm;
- relevant contractors who may have unsupervised access to children; and
- anyone else who Candlebark Farm staff feel requires a WWCC due to the nature of the work that they are undertaking for Candlebark Farm.

The type of evidence that an applicant is required to provide to Candlebark Farm will vary depending on the type of position that they are applying for. However, an applicant will not be offered a position where any possible unsupervised access to children is possible until they provide the required evidence to Candlebark Farm.

Maintenance contractors are required to sign in and are asked for their WWCC, if they cannot supply one, a staff member will monitor the individual when required to ensure they are not able to access children unsupervised while at the camp.

Candlebark Farm will exercise discretion and may require applicants to provide a Police check in accordance with the law and as appropriate, before they commence their engagement and during their time with Candlebark Farm in regular intervals.

Once engaged, Candlebark Farm will provide staff and volunteers with access to this policy and staff and volunteers must review and acknowledge their understanding of this policy.

9. SUPPORTING PERSONNEL

Candlebark Farm is committed to ensuring that all staff, volunteers and contractors receive training to ensure that they understand their responsibilities in relation to child safety. Mandatory training at Candlebark Farm includes:

- Induction Training

Candlebark Farm assists its Board members, staff, contractors and volunteers to incorporate child safety considerations into decision-making and to promote a culturally safe environment where children are empowered to speak up about issues that affect them.

10. RISK MANAGEMENT APPROACH

Child safety is a part of Candlebark Farm's culture and is included and addressed in the overall risk management and operations.

11. POLICY BREACHES

It is a breach of this policy for any person or organisation to which this policy applies, to have been found to have done anything contrary to this policy. Any person who may breach this policy is subject to disciplinary process.

12. POLICY PROMOTION

The policy is promoted in staff meeting/training events and is included in our staff Induction Program.

This policy is also communicated to all staff and Board members via email.

13. RECORD KEEPING

Candlebark Farm will retain records of reports of child abuse and complaints about child safety.

In maintaining records of reports about child safety, Candlebark Farm will maintain confidentiality and privacy for children and families in accordance with legislation.

Candlebark Farm will appropriately note identified risks to child safety through the record keeping process and will incorporate those into its risk management plan and review process as outlined in our code of Conduct under **PROCESSES FOR REPORTING AND HANDLING CHILD ABUSE CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS;**

14. REVIEW PROCESS

Every two years, and following every reportable incident, a review shall be conducted to assess whether the organisation's child protection policies or procedures require modification to better protect the children under the organisation's care.

If you would like to provide Candlebark Farm with any feedback or suggestions to improve this policy, please contact Mike Hill at mike.hill@candlebarkfarm.com.au

In addition to the regular review of this policy, recommendations for changes to the policy may be submitted to the manager for consideration at any time. In the event that changes are accepted, the policy will be updated, and circulated to all stakeholders via appropriate communication channels.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Management, staff, volunteers and contractors at Candlebark Farm are required to abide by this Code.

General Behaviour and Manner

At all times, Candlebark Farm staff and any engaged instructors are required to;

- present in a warm, friendly and approachable manner to all campers whether adults or children regardless of their sex, religion, disability or sexual orientation etc.
- demonstrate our committed to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children, and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and to providing a safe environment for children living with a disability

Physical Contact

Candlebark Farm acknowledges that there are often times when it is clearly appropriate for physical contact between adults and children. This can occur especially during activities where equipment needs to be fitted (e.g. harnesses, helmets, life jackets) or assistance provided (e.g. entering canoes, dismounting from a flying fox). Because it can be easily misconstrued, do not give a congratulatory hug or pat on the back. A high 5 would be a

suitable alternative as it involves the child making the choice to allow it. Candlebark Farm staff must use the following principles for touching children while respecting their privacy and safe feeling:

- Any touching must be with the child's permission, for example, ask, "May I adjust your harness?"
- Touching should be in the open and not secretive, with other people around and not especially focussed on one person.
- Touching should only ever be to support or respond to a need of the child and NEVER to meet the needs of an adult.
- Any touching must avoid body areas such as breasts, buttocks and the groin.
- Don't pat a person's head as some cultures find this very disrespectful.

Personal Privacy

Children are entitled to privacy in personal matters and Candlebark Farm staff must respect this.

If a Candlebark Farm staff member believes there is evidence of a problem or disclosure of abuse, it is the staff member's responsibility to report this - see "**PROCESSES FOR REPORTING AND HANDLING**"

CHILD ABUSE CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS" below.

Sleeping, showering and toilet privacy

Boys and girls have separate ensuite bunkrooms and must stay in their designated bunkroom.

Adults with supervisory roles must respect the children's privacy, and knock or call out to let them know that they are entering the bunkroom.

- Cleaning of ensuite bunkrooms are scheduled to be done at off-peak times when campers are less likely to be using the facilities.
- When cleaning is being carried out a sign to that effect is displayed.

Avoiding compromising situations

Candlebark Farm staff and any engaged Contractors must avoid placing themselves or campers in situations where they can be compromised.

- Avoid looking into Bunkrooms through windows.
- Avoid being alone with a camper; stay in view of others
- Knock and ask permission to enter sleeping or private areas
- Use dining room toilets only.
- Avoid 'favourites' and treat all campers with the same level of friendliness and courtesy

- Seek the camper's permission before touching or adjusting equipment they are wearing
- Avoid situations that cause embarrassment or humiliation to campers
- Avoid sexual talk.
- Don't behave in a way that promotes promiscuity or the acceptance of sexually explicit material.
- Avoid looking at campers while they are in their bathers
- Maintain eye contact if you must speak with swimmers

Administering First Aid

Groups are responsible for their own first aid requirements, however, if Candlebark Farm staff or engaged Contractors are required to render first aid or emergency treatment:

- They will involve another staff member of the same sex as any child requiring attention whenever possible. Otherwise they will endeavour to have another person present.
- Unless absolutely necessary, they will leave examination of private areas to health professionals.
- They will not force children to remove clothing for an examination
- They will record their actions in accordance with first aid recording procedures

- Refer to Group Leader with issues of campers requiring medication.

Favouritism and exclusiveness

There is no place for 'favourites' at camp. In most instances, the showing of favouritism to a child or small group of children fosters the needs of the adult, not the child. It can create emotional dependence on the adult and isolate the child from peers. When a child needs a little extra attention, it must be given openly and carried out in such a way that no secretiveness or exclusivity is perceived by the child or others.

Bullying and Harassment

Bullying is an act of aggression causing embarrassment, pain or discomfort to another. It can take away many forms - physical, verbal, gesture, victimisation, extortion, exclusion or offensive notes/graffiti etc. Forms of harassment, such as those of a sexual or racial nature, are also unwanted behaviour directed towards an individual. This sort of behaviour should not be ignored, and staff should take appropriate action. For example, reporting incidents to the Group Leader, removing occasions for bullying by conducting well organised activities, or simply by being vigilant. Bullying and harassment must always be treated seriously -

it is important to be consistent and assertive in dealing with all forms of bullying.

PROCESSES FOR REPORTING AND HANDLING CHILD ABUSE CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS;

Any incident, complaint or concern regarding child safety at Candlebark Farm must be taken seriously and fully investigated (with outside help if necessary). The Camp Manager will act to comply with State law or implement appropriate action such as reporting to police, school principal, or other relevant authority.

Reporting

Any staff member, volunteer or contractor who has grounds to suspect abusive activity must immediately notify the appropriate child protection service or the police. They should also advise their supervisor about their concern.

In situations where the supervisor is suspected of involvement in the activity, or if the person having the suspicion does not believe that the matter is being appropriately addressed or dealt with, the matter should be reported to the next highest level of supervision.

Supervisors must report complaints of suspected abusive behaviour or misconduct to the Manager and also to any external

regulatory body such as the police.

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Investigating

If the appropriate child protection service or the police decide to conduct an investigation of this report, all employees, contractors or volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation.

Whether or not the authorities decide to conduct an investigation, the Manager will consult with the authorities to determine whether an internal investigation is appropriate. If it is decided that such an investigation will not conflict with any proceeding of the authorities, the Manager may decide to conduct such an investigation. All employees, contractors and volunteers must co-operate fully with the investigation.

Any such investigation will be conducted according to the rules of natural justice.

The Manager will make every effort to keep any such investigation confidential; however, from time to time other members of staff may need to be consulted in conjunction with the investigation.

After an initial review and a determination that the suspected abuse warrants additional investigation, the Manager shall coordinate the investigation with the appropriate investigators and / or law enforcement officials. Internal or external legal representatives will be involved in the process, as deemed appropriate.

Responding

If it is alleged that a member of staff, contractor or a volunteer may have committed an offence or have breached the organisation's policies or its Code of Conduct the person concerned may be stood down (with pay, where applicable) while an investigation is conducted.

If the investigation concludes that on the balance of probabilities an offence (or a breach of the organisation's policies or Code of Conduct) has occurred then disciplinary action may follow, up to and including dismissal or cessation of involvement with the organisation. The findings of the investigation will also be reported to any external body as required.

PRIVACY

All personal information considered or recorded will respect the privacy of the individuals involved unless there is a risk to someone's safety. **Candlebark Farm** has safeguards and practices in place to ensure any personal information is protected. Everyone is entitled to know how the personal information is recorded, what will be done with it, and who will be able to access it.